Views of the Standing Committee

The proposed resolution has the laudable purpose of ensuring closer cooperation between the historians and the archivists in the task of surveying, listing and acquiring records in private custody.

The Indian Historical Records Commission and its Research and Publication Committee have already passed a number of Resolutions recommending:-

(1) The setting up of Regional Records Survey Committees in the various States and Co-ordination of activities between the Universities, the Regional Records Survey Committees and the State Archives Departments was recommended by Research and Publications Committee(Resolution Nos.IV of its 1st meeting (1942) and V of its 3rd meeting(1943).

(2) That the Universities should set up their own Archival Cells to look after their own records (Resolution No.XIV of 38th Session).

(3) Opening of Regional Records Centres at the headquarters of each Commissioner's Division (Resolution No.XIV of 41st Session)

(4) That the Central and State Governments should open the maximum number of Records Centres or Intermediate Repositories(Resolution No.VI of 42nd Session).

These resolutions, if and when implemented, would secure substantially the purpose of the resolution proposed now. For surveying, listing and acquiring private papers, the machinery of the Regional Records Survey Committees is visualised and has been functioning in many States. The Regional Records Survey Committees also bring together the historians from Universities and archivists in the States, and can serve the purpose better. The Andhra University is already represented on the Regional Records Survey Committee of the State through its Professor of History. Any particular problem faced by the Andhra University in the exploration of records in the Andhra region should, therefore, be taken up with the Regional Records Survey Committee, which is among the most active Survey Committees in the country.

The need is to implement more vigorously the earlier Resolutions regarding opening of Regional Records Centres at the headquarters of each Commissioner's Division and regarding the setting up of Regional Records Survey Committees, and to allot adequate funds for these.

B. Circulation of the Proceedings of the Commission

(2) Resolution by Shri Durgaprasad Bhattacharya

"Resolved that the draft proceedings of the Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission be circulated within two months of a Session and members be requested to send their comments or corrections within a month from the date of receipt of the draft proceedings; further that the final proceedings be circulated at least six months before the next Session".

Standing Committee's views:

The draft Proceedings of the meetings of Committees and Commissions have to be approved by their Presidents/Charimen/ Conveners in any case. Circulating them to Members beforethat and getting their comments would impose further delays in their finalisation. Regarding the proposal that the approved proceedings be circulated at least six months before the next Session, this is already the general practice. Relevant extracts from the Proceedings of the 42nd Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission containing Resolutions were supplied to all Members during June and July 1973. The Session was held in January 1973. Proceedings were not cyclostyled in full because they have soon to be printed in full, and according to the decision of the Government of India, (vide Ministry of Works and Housing circular No. L-15011/6/71-PI, dated 24 February 1972) maximum economy has to be made in the cyclostyling and printing of Government Publications.

C. Centralisation of Records

(3) Resolution by Dr. Gopal Krishna

"The Indian Historical Records Commission recommends to all the State Governments that Prison records pertaining to the freedom fighters imprisoned in their territories from time to time over the entire period of the Freedom Struggle be centralised in the State Archives. It further recommends that theNational Archives of India should prepare a microfilm copy of these records and make it available to the students of the National Movement."

Standing Committee's views:

The Commission at its 40th Session held at Madras in February 1970 has already recommended vide Resolution No.XIII that all the State Governments should transfer records of the National Movement, especially from 1885 to 1947 in the custody of the Offices of their Home Departments and other Offices/Departments and quasi-Government Offices, to the State Archives and these be thrown open for research. The records of the prisons in the States are also covered by the above Resolution. Among the State Governments/Union Territories which have organised Archives Departments of their own, Kerala, Punjab, Orissa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Goa, Daman and Diu have agreed to implement this Resolution. Government of Assam informed that the records relating to Freedom Struggle were available in the Secretariat Record Office. But the transfer of similar records from other offices was not possible at that time due to lack of accommodation. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has, however, reported that it was not possible to split the records of the National Movement from the series, nor was it possible to transfer all the records from 1885 to 1947 of all Government or quasi-Government Offices to the State Archives for want of space. Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, and Mysore, promised to bear the Resolution in mind as and when Archives Departments were set up. Manipur and Madhya Pradesh on the same analogy, stated that action on the above Resolution was not possible. Laccadives reported that records on the National Movement were not available.

The Standing Committee is of the view that the real solution to the problem lies in ensuring that all the non-current records lying with the various Ministries/Departments and other Field Offices of the Government of India as well as the State Governments and Union Territories, be transferred to their respective Archives Repositories both for preservation and use by research scholars. Records dealing with Freedom Movement would then automatically be transferred to the Archives, for use by scholars.

The proposal that the National Archives of India should prepare microfilm copies of all the records in the prisons relating to the Freedom Fighters is not workable. No State Government or Prison would be prepared to send the relevant records for being microfilmed nor has the National Archives of India the capacity to send its mobile camera to every prison/State for this purpose in addition to its other commitments. Only when the Important Prison records are deposited in their respective Central or Divisional Archives the scholars could get them microfilmed. During the 5th Plan period, provision has been made for enlargement of reprography services at the State Archives or their Regional Centres to be opened.

D. Reference Media

Resolution by Dr. G.S.Dikshit

"The National Archives should undertake a programme of amalgamating the Indexes to its records with the list of documents actually transferred to it, and since the programme will involve considerable outlay of expenditure, provision should be made in the 5th Five Year Plan for necessary staff and expenses."

Explanatory note

At present the National Archives have printed alphabetical indexes to its records from 1830 onwards which are the main reference aids to the records in its custody. However, when a scholar requisitions the documents mentioned therein, quite often, he is told, that they are not transferred to the Archives. To avoid disappointment and to save time, the Archives staff advise scholars to look upon the Transfer Lists, before requisitioning documents. Since there is only one copy of the Transfer Lists, time is spent in requisitioning it. After he gets it, the scholar finds in this list only numbers of files which are transferred and no indication of their contents. The Archives Staff also has to spend time in checking up if the file concerned is transferred. It is, therefore, highly desirable for both the users as well as the suppliers to have an alphabetical subject index of the files which are actually in the Archives. As the number of such lists is very large, its index cannot be prepared

without suitable additional establishment. The Government of India should be approached for this purpose to provide for it in the 5th Five Year Plan. Modern duplicating techniques may be used to save printing costs and delays in bringing out such indexes. If one calculates the man hours wasted at present in checking transfer lists either by Researchers or Archives Staff, the preparation of the index to files actually with the Archives will ultimately be found to be cheaper though capital outlay will be substantial.

Standing Committee's views:

The difficulty being faced by scholars is genuine. But no easily practicable solution appears possible. The Transfer Lists contain only file numbers and give no indication of the contents or subject matter of a file. To prepare new indexes of all the millions of files in the National Archives of India is out of question. The only possible solution appears to be to mark NT (not transferred) in the index volumes against all files which are there in the index volumes but which do not figure in the Transfer Lists. This solution would also involve a heavy load of work, as the index volumes are estimated to total nearly 8,000, and each entry in each of these volumes would have to be checked with the transfer lists. Moreover, the index volumes, being creation of the records creating agencies themselves, have an archival value of their own, and any addition or tampering with their entries is wrong from the view point of archival principles. Also, the important schemes of the National Archives of India in the 5th Plan are being cut or pruned due to cut in the 5th Plan allocation, and it would be impossible to include in the 5th Plan this new item of work without giving up some other important scheme.

E. Survey of Temple Records

(5) Resolution by Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee

"Resolved that there be a comprehensive survey of records preserved in big temples followed by the preparation of a descriptive list which should be made available to scholars in the National Archives of India".

Explanatory Note

Temple records are immensely useful for research in socio-economic history. These records are lying scattered in different temples the contents of which are little known to researchers. A survey of these records followed by a descriptive list will help the scholars in locating the desired materials.

Standing Committee's views:

The Commission has already passed Resolutions concerning the preservation and listing of the records of the temples and other religious institutions. By Resolution No. VII of the 41st Session held in 1971, the Commission has appealed to the concerned authorities of Temples, Gurdwaras, Churches, Khankahs, Waqfs etc. to allow bon fide research scholars to consult their documents and they should, if necessary prepare lists of these records. By Resolution No. VIII of the same Session, the Commission made an appeal to the authorities to maintaining the records of these institutions to ensure their proper preservation and if possible to deposit them with the various Archives or Learned Institutions. In response to these, some State Govenments and Union Territories (namely Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Goa, Daman and Diu, Kerala, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh) have reported having taken steps to contact the authorities of these institutions.

The Governments of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have reported that these Resolutions were receiving attention. The matter was again discussed in depth at the 42nd Session of the Commission and a Resolution (No.IX) was adopted requesting the State Governments to enact a Law bringing under the supervision of the State Archival Services, the records of the private religious bodies, Learned Institutions, Universities etc. The Commission may like to wait for a years or so before passing any other Resolution concerning the records of the religious bodies. However the Regional Records Survey Committees should give priority to the survey and listing of the records of the Temples etc. and their lists should be made available to the National Archives of India, to be published in the volumes of the National Register of Private Records.

F. Acquisition of Microfilms of Records of Foreign Consuls in India

(6) Resolution by Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee

"Resolved that microfilm copies of the reports from Foreign Consuls stationed in different cities in India before 1947 be acquired by the National Archives of India as far as possible".

Explanatory Note

These reports which were regularly sent to the Home authorities are quite informative and especially throw light on the progress and trend of the Nationalist Movement in India. These reports which are likely to be less biased, will definitely help a proper evaluation of the Nationalist Movement in this country.

Standing Committee's views:

The National Archives of India has regular programme of acquiring microfilms of records of foreign Consulates stationed in India. Already the Department has acquired microfilms of records of some United States and Russian Consulates in India.

Information has also been collected by the Department about the records of the German and Hungarian Consulates available in the archival repositories of the German Democratic Republics and Hungary. The Department is trying to acquire microfilms of these papers under Cultural Exchange Programmes. No Resolution, therefore, appears necessary.

G. Constitution of a Sub-Committee of the Commission

(7) Resolution by Shri J.K.Jain

"This Commission recommends that a small Sub-Committee out of its existing members should be constituted to work under the Chairmanship of the Director of National Archives to assess and assist the State Archives in the task of implementation of various resolutions passed by the Indian Historical Records Commission."

Explanatory Note

After going through the proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission of the recent past, I have come to a conclusion that the activities of the Commission have almost been reduced to an annual stock taking of the actions taken by the various Archives in the year under review. But I feel that it could serve the Archival cause

in a better manner if certain steps are taken to revitalise it. As an immediate measure and if the members of the Commission approve of it, we could make a provision of a Sub-Committee constituted out of its members who should meet at least twice in a year to assess and examine mainly the difficulties which the member States might be facing in getting the various Resolutions implemented. This Committee, I am sure could definitely help in achieving some positive results.

Standing Committee's views:

Para IV(2) of the Constitution of the Indian Historical Records Commission empowers the Commission to appoint one or more Committees to deal with particular problems requiring investigation. The Standing Committee has also been created to assist in the implementation of Resolutions by reviewing the action taken on them. What the other Committees would be able to do which the Standing Committee cannot, is not clear, though there is no objection to setting up of a Committee as provided for in the Indian Historical Records Commission Constitution.

H. Access to Records

(8) Resolution by Shri J.K. Jain

"The Indian Historical Records Commission strongly recommends that all the State Archives should take immediate steps in declaring open their respective records upto December 1945 to bonafide research scholars."

Explanatory Note

It is quite incongruous that in our country inspite of single code of Civil and other laws for the entire country there could not be a uniform rule for the 'open period' of the records. This limit varies from State to State and that too without much justification. Strangely enough almost seven years have passed when this Commission recommended in its 1966 Session that all the States should throw open their records which are more than 30 years old but I doubt if much has been done in many States. Therefore, I once again solicit the support of my fellow members to put on record their sense of concern and may adopt yet another resolution.

Standing Committees views

The Commission has been fully seized of the problem of enforcing uniformity in the rules governing access to the records of the Government of India and the State Governments. Following Resolution No.XVII of the 37th Session of the Commission, held in 1966, recommending that "All records in the custody of the Union and State Governments which are more than 30 years old should be opened for bonafide researches", the Commission at its 38th Session held in 1967, reiterated (vide Resolution V) the need for all the State Governments to frame rules governing access to their records in conformity with those in force in the National Archives of India. The replies received from the State Governments about the progress made in this behalf were again discussed at the 40th, 41st and 42nd Sessions of the Commission held in 1970, 1971 and 1973. The Chairman of the

Standing Committee has addressed the Chief Secretaries of State Governments to secure implementation of these Resolutions and favourable results are expected. Still, there appears no objection to repeat the earlier recommendations of the Commission.

I. Records of the Political Department of the erstwhile Bombay Government

(9) Resolution by Shri V.G. Khobrekar

"Government of India may be requested to move the Government of Great Britain to transfer the records of the Political Department of the then Bombay Government for the period from 1830 to 1909 which were inadvertently sent to London and are now housed in India Office Library and Records. Also that Government of India may try to find out whereabout of records from 1914-33 and restore them to Maharashtra Archives."

Explanatory Note

Prior to 1924 records of the Residents and Political Agents for Native States in the Bombay Province were in the custody of the Bombay Archives. On the transfer of the control to the Government of India, of the Political Department, these records were transferred to that Government.

But later, on termination of the Paramountcy in 1947, the records of the Western India States Agency only were sent back to the Bombay Archives and the records pertaining to the Deccan States were sent to the United Kingdom.

Recently, the Director of Archives, Maharashtra State, spent a fortnight in India Office Library and Records, London to inspect the Deccan States and Kolhapur records. He found

that the records from 1820 to 1909 are in the said Office. Those from 1909 to 1914 are with the Bombay Archives mixed up with miscellaneous series. However, there is no trace of the records from 1914 to 1947 of this series. These are believed to be with the National Archives.

The Indian Historical Records Commission requests the Government of India to take up this matter with the Government of the United Kingdom requesting them to transfer the records in its custody for the period from 1820 to 1909 to Bombay Archives (Maharashtra State) to make it a complete series.

Standing Committee's views

The National Archives of India is already obtaining from the India Office Library and Records, London, microfilm copies of those Residency Records which are not available with it. There should, therefore, be no difficulty for the Government of Maharashtra to obtain microfilm copies of the records of the late Political Department of the erstwhile Bombay Government from 1820 to 1909 which are available with the above Library in London. In the case of the records of the Bombay Political Department for the period 1914-33 too, the India Office Library and Records could provide the clue if at all. So far as the National Archives of India is concerned, it had received a few series of the late Bombay Political Department records. But all these were returned to the Maharashtra State Archives in 1965. At the present the National Archives of India has in its possession only the records of the

Kolhapur and Deccan States Agency from 1935-49. These and all the other records of the Residencies which may be available with the Maharashtra Government and other States belong to the Government of India and should be made over to the National Archives of India. The Committee is pleased to note that Maharashtra has already agreed to do the needful.

J. Institution of Scholarships and other Financial Assistance for Historical Studies

(10-12) Resolutions by Prof. Ramlal Parikh

(10) "Resolved that the Government of India and University Grants Commission be requested to institute scholarships for Ph.D. studies based on historical records and archives whether for a degree or outside the academic work".

Explanatory Notes

Vast materials are buried in Archival Directorates of the country, which so far have remained inaccessible due to lack of uniform set of rules. Research scholars, therefore, are experiencing hardships in many ways in getting useful source materials for their research work. Archival Directorates themselves are not in a position to utilise the materials critically by undertaking publications. Therefore it is necessary to institute sufficient number of research scholarships for research project for those who are in search of the required material. This will promote research so far neglected in modern period of Indian history.

(11) "Resolved that research grants be given to university teachers for compiling unknown historical records".

Explanatory note

In order to help scholars travel grants should be given in unearthing materials for useful purposes from all the Archives of the country.

(12) "Resolved that the financial support be given to those who desire to bring out bibliographies and monographs on records."

Standing Committee's views

These proposed resolutions recommend to the University Grants Commission and perhaps other un-named agencies to give scholarships, travel grants, research grants and financial supoort to scholars and research workers engaged in Ph.D. studies among archives, engaged in unearthing unknown historical records or engaged in bringing Bibliographies and Monographs on records.

The University Grants Commission, many Universities, the Indian Council of Historical Research, the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, the Nehru Memorial Fund etc. already give scholarships, travel grants, etc. for research. It is desirable that the number and amount of these scholarships should be increased as much as possible, and that they should be available for research of the types mentioned, in addition to research on other subjects. The Resolutions can perhaps be reworded and combined into one Resolution to bring out clearly the objective.

K. The Indian Archives

(13) Resolution by Prof. Ramlal Parikh

"Resolved that a two-monthly periodical of the National Archives of India be published instead of six monthly and its Hindi edition should also be published".

Standing Committee's views

The Indian Archives, being brought out by the National Archives of India as a six monthly journal, began in 1947 as a Quarterly. But in 1950 the journal had to be made Bi-annual, because of the difficulties encountered, mainly in obtaining sufficient articles of a high standard on archival subjects. On many occasions, several issues of the Bio-annual journal have had to be amalgamated into a single issue. Printing difficulties, shortage of paper, work-load in editing and proof-reading etc. have also to be considered in deciding the periodicity of the journal. It is obviously more important to ensure high quality than high periodicity in a professional journal of this type.

Since each issue of the journal has only a small number of copies printed (generally 500 copies), bringing it out in Hindi edition would be uneconomical, and would also require additional staff for translation etc. Instead, the National Archives of India has been trying to include Hindi articles also in the journal to make it bi-lingual.

L. Microfilming of Newspapers and other Periodicals

(14) Resolution by Dr.S.V.Desika Char

"The Indian Historical Records Commission recommends to the Government of India and the State Governments the desirability of providing facilities in their respective Archival Departments for the microfilming of newspapers and other periodicals, current as well as old, at the request of the owners or proprietors concerned, and conserving one copy in the repository as a record of permanent historical value".

Explanatory note

While great attention is being paid for retrieving and preserving old newspapers and other periodicals as important sources of historical knowledge, little attention is being paid to the conservation of the very same class of materials being produced currently. Institutions like the National Library of India are trying to preserve in original some of the important current newspapers and periodicals. This could be done only in respect of the materials of the last decade or two. Having regard to the poor quality of the paper generally in use and the difficulties of storage, it is highly desirable to have them microfilmed currently. Some of the leading newspapers have already adopted the policy of having their publications microfilmed to ensure their permanent preservation. It is desirable that a Microfilm Unit is set up in every State Archives where it is not already found, and facilities provided to owners and proprietors to have their publications

microfilmed at a subsidised rate. One condition for providing the facility should be that the State Archives keeps one copy of the microfilm, preferably the negative, with the right to make an additional positive for consultation by scholars. It is hardly necessary to state that this would be a major step towards conservation of a very important source of history for the benefit of posterity, apart from its contemporary value. The Standing Committee of the Indian Historical Records Commission may be authorised to constitute a small committee comprising interalia the Director of the National Archives of India, the Director of the National Library of India and two eminent persons to represent the proprietors and Journalists to work out the details and tender necessary advice.

Standing Committee's views

There can be no doubt that it is desirable to provide microfilming facilities in every State Archives. These facilities are necessary to film certain records of the archives itself for insurance copy or for meeting the demands of scholars, and also for microfilming important records in private possession. This microfilming capacity can also be used for filming newspapers and journals.

It is agreed that filming of selected newspapers soon after they come out will be a more systematic method, instead of filming newspapers when they become old and start decaying.

At present newspaper filming is being undertaken by the National Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, National Archives of India and also some Newspaper Offices themselves. It is understood that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting are also considering the microfilming of newspapers etc. In order to avoid duplication and waste of effort and resources, it certainly appears desirable to have a Committee representing the main agencies involved, to decide which newspapers, in English and Indian languages should be selected for microfilming and which agencies should be entrusted with this task. If some newspapers are themselves interested in microfilming of their issues this Committee can settle suitable terms and details with them.

M. Co-ordination of Archival activites in the Country

15. Resolution by the Government of Orissa

"Resolved that the Standing Committee of the Indian Historical Records Commission be entrusted with the task of promoting co-ordination of archival activities in the country."

Explanatory Note:

Maintenance of common standard in archival activities, such as documentation, arrangement, retirement and preservation of records is essential, because deviation from these standards is sure to be harmful to any archival collection. In the past, valuable collections had disappeared because in India there is no common standard in archival activities. Repositories in some States are still in their infancy and co-ordination is essentially required.

The Standing Committee can play an important role in standardising the archival activities in the country and for this purpose the Committee should be vested with the power of inspection of different State Archives. The financial liabilities for the execution of co-ordination programme should vest on the Union Government.

Standing Committee's views:

The proposal can be implemented only if the State Governments agree to it. The Indian Historical Records Commission is already entrusted with the task of coordination of archival activities. Moreover, it is not clear what will be the financial liabilities for promoting coordination which the Central Government will be called upon to bear.